FUTURE AI TRENDS · COURSE

Future-Ready

A Practical AI Skills Course

Seven short modules, copy-paste prompts and a 30-day plan for using today's AI tools well, safely and with confidence.

FutureAITrends

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Welcome

AI tools have moved from novelty to everyday utility. They're built into email, documents, phones, search and shopping, and they're starting to take actions on our behalf. Most people, though, have never been shown how to use them well.

This course is a practical, plain-English guide. It won't make you an AI engineer, and it doesn't promise shortcuts to money or overnight results. What it will do is give you durable skills: how to brief an AI tool clearly, how to check its work, how to hand off tasks safely, and how to judge new tools without the hype.

How to use it. Each module has a short lesson, key ideas, copy-paste prompts and a quick exercise. Words in [square brackets] are for you to fill in. Work through one module every few days, or follow the 30-day plan at the end.

Works with any assistant. The prompts work with general AI assistants such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini or Microsoft Copilot. Features and names change often, so the course focuses on skills that carry over.

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32 prompts in total. This course is for general education only and isn't legal, financial, medical or professional advice. Always verify important information and follow your employer's policies on AI use.

The BRIEF method at a glance

You'll use this throughout the course. Run through it for anything that matters.

B **Background**
Who you are, what the situation is, who the result is for.

R **Request**
One clear job: summarise, draft, compare, plan, critique.

I **Inputs**
Paste or describe the material it should work from.

E **Expected output**
Length, format, tone, structure. Show an example if you have one.

F **Follow-up**
Treat the first answer as a draft. Ask for changes, alternatives or a critique.

Before **A vague request**

```
Write an email to my landlord about the heater.
```

After **A BRIEF request**

```
Background: I rent a flat and the heater has been broken for 10 days. I reported it
by phone on the 3rd and nothing has happened.
Request: Draft a polite but firm follow-up email to my landlord.
Inputs: Flat 4B. Reported on 3 March by phone. Two cold nights since.
Expected output: Under 150 words, clear subject line, asks for a repair date by
Friday.
Then: suggest one firmer version in case I don't hear back.
```

MODULE 1

How today's AI tools actually work

Goal: Build a simple mental model so you know when to trust an AI answer and when to check it.

Most AI assistants are built on large language models. They have learned patterns from enormous amounts of text and generate the most likely next words for your request. That makes them very good at drafting, summarising, explaining, rewording and brainstorming. It also means they can produce confident sentences that are simply wrong. This is usually called a hallucination.

An AI assistant is not a search engine or a database, even when it can search the web. Treat it like a fast, well-read assistant who never says 'I don't know' unless you ask it to. Your job is to give it good material, set the task clearly and check anything that matters.

Models also have a training cut-off. Unless a tool is searching the web or reading a document you gave it, it may not know about recent prices, rules, products or events. When something might have changed, ask the tool to search or check it yourself.

A useful rule: the more an answer depends on facts, numbers, names, dates, law, health or money, the more you should verify it. The more it depends on structure, wording or ideas, the more you can lean on it.

Key ideas

- Great at: drafting, rewording, summarising, explaining, structuring, brainstorming.
- Weak at: exact facts, recent events, maths without a tool, citations it hasn't actually read.
- Higher stakes = more checking. Never rely on AI alone for legal, medical or financial decisions.

Copy-paste prompts

1.1 Ask for uncertainty

```
Answer the question below. After your answer, list which parts you are confident
about and which parts I should verify, and why.

Question: [your question]
```

1.2 Explain like a colleague

```
Explain [topic] to me as if I'm a smart colleague from a different department. Use one everyday analogy, avoid jargon, and finish with three questions I could ask to test my understanding.
```

1.3 Check its own work

```
Review your previous answer. Point out anything that might be inaccurate, outdated or oversimplified, then give a corrected version.
```

1.4 Know the limits

```
Before you answer, tell me whether this question depends on information that may have changed recently. If so, say what I should look up.

Question: [your question]
```

Try it

Pick a topic you know well. Ask an AI assistant five questions about it, including one tricky detail. Note where it was strong, where it was vague and where it was wrong. You now have a feel for its blind spots.

MODULE 2

Asking well: the BRIEF method

Goal: Get useful answers on the first or second try instead of the fifth.

Most disappointing AI answers come from short, vague requests. 'Write an email to my landlord' gives the tool almost nothing to work with, so it fills the gaps with generic text. The fix is to brief it the way you would brief a capable new colleague.

The BRIEF method gives you a checklist: Background, Request, Inputs, Expected output and Follow-up. You won't need every part every time, but running through it for anything important makes a dramatic difference.

Follow-up is the step people skip. The first answer is a draft. Ask for a shorter version, a warmer tone, three alternatives, or a critique from the point of view of the person who will read it. Two or three rounds usually beat one long prompt.

Key ideas

- Brief it like a new colleague: context first, then one clear task.
- Give it real material to work from instead of asking it to guess.
- Say exactly what 'good' looks like: length, format, tone, audience.

Copy-paste prompts

2.1 The full BRIEF

```
Background: I'm [role] and I'm writing to [audience] about [situation].
Request: [one clear task].
Inputs: [paste notes, facts, previous messages].
Expected output: [length], [format], [tone].
Ask me up to three questions first if anything important is missing.
```

2.2 Interview me first

```
I want help with [task]. Before you start, ask me the five questions that would
most improve your answer. Wait for my replies.
```

2.3 Give me options

```
Give me three different versions of this: one short and direct, one warm and
friendly, one formal. Label each.

[text or task]
```

2.4 Reader's critique

```
Read this as if you were [the recipient]. What's unclear, what would annoy you, and
what's missing? Then rewrite it to fix those problems.

[draft]
```

2.5 Match my style

```
Here are two examples of my writing. Describe my style in five bullet points, then
write [new piece] in that style.

Example 1: [paste]
Example 2: [paste]
```

2.6 Turn it into a template

```
Turn the prompt we just used into a reusable template with [square brackets] for
the parts that change, so I can use it again.
```

Try it

Take a real task from this week. Write it once as a one-line request and once using BRIEF. Compare the two answers side by side. Save the better prompt as a template.

MODULE 3

Research and fact-checking with AI

Goal: Use AI to learn faster and organise information without being misled.

AI tools are excellent research assistants for getting oriented: explaining a new field, mapping out the key questions, summarising long documents and comparing options. They are poor final authorities. The safest approach is to use AI to understand and organise, and use primary sources to confirm.

When a tool can search the web, ask it to show its sources and open the important ones yourself. Check that the source actually says what the summary claims. Be especially careful with numbers, quotes and anything that sounds surprisingly neat.

When you give an AI a document, ask it to work only from that document and to quote the relevant line for each point. This makes it much easier to spot when it has filled a gap with a guess.

> **Key ideas**
>
> - Use AI to get oriented and organised; use original sources to confirm.
> - Ask for sources and open the ones that matter.
> - For documents, ask it to stick to the text and quote the supporting line.

Copy-paste prompts

3.1 Map a new topic

```
I'm new to [topic]. Give me: the 5 key concepts, the main debates or open
questions, common beginner mistakes, and what kinds of sources experts trust. Keep
it to one page.
```

3.2 Summarise a document faithfully

```
Summarise the document below using only what it says. For each point, quote the
sentence it comes from. If something important is unclear or missing, say so.

[paste document]
```

3.3 Compare options

```
Compare [option A], [option B] and [option C] for [my situation]. Make a table
with: cost, pros, cons, best for, and what I should double-check before deciding.
```

3.4 Find the weak spots

```
Here is an article/claim: [paste]. What evidence would support it, what would
contradict it, and what questions should I ask before believing it?
```

3.5 Plain-English translation

```
Rewrite this [contract clause / policy / technical paragraph] in plain English.
Then list anything that could affect me and that I should ask a professional about.

[paste]
```

Try it

Ask an AI tool to summarise a news article or report you have open. Check three of its points against the original. Did it add anything that wasn't there?

MODULE 4

AI agents and automation

Goal: Understand what 'agents' are and hand off multi-step tasks without losing control.

An AI agent is an AI system that can take actions, not just write text. It might browse websites, fill in forms, use apps you've connected, run code or work through a task in several steps. Many assistants now include some agent-style features, and more everyday apps are adding them.

Agents are useful for tasks with clear steps and a clear finish line: gathering information from several pages, tidying files, drafting a batch of replies, or comparing products against your criteria. They are less reliable with vague goals, unfamiliar websites or anything that needs judgement about people.

The golden rule is to keep a human checkpoint before anything that is hard to undo: sending messages, paying, deleting, booking or sharing personal information. Give an agent the smallest access it needs, start with low-stakes tasks and review what it did.

Not everything needs an agent. Simple 'when this happens, do that' automations in tools you already use (email rules, calendar templates, spreadsheet formulas, no-code automation apps) are often more predictable and cheaper.

Key ideas

- Agents act; chatbots answer. Give agents clear steps and a clear finish line.
- Always approve before anything is sent, paid, deleted or shared.
- Start small, grant minimal access, and review the result.

Copy-paste prompts

4.1 Plan before acting

```
I want you to [task]. Before doing anything, write out your step-by-step plan, the information or access you'll need, and any point where you'll need my approval. Wait for my go-ahead.
```

4.2 Checkpoint rule

```
While working on this task, stop and ask me before you send, submit, buy, delete or share anything. Show me exactly what you're about to do.
```

4.3 Research run

```
Look at [3–5 sources/sites] and collect [specific information] into a table with columns: [columns]. Note the source link for each row and flag anything you couldn't confirm.
```

4.4 Find my automations

```
Here's what my typical week looks like: [describe]. Which tasks are repetitive and rule-based enough to automate? For each, suggest the simplest way to do it.
```

4.5 Debrief

```
Summarise what you just did: each step, what you changed, anything that didn't work, and anything I should double-check.
```

Try it

List five tasks you did more than once this week. Mark each as: ask an AI to help (writing/thinking), hand to an agent (clear multi-step task), automate with a rule, or keep doing yourself. Try one from the first two groups.

MODULE 5

Images, voice and video

Goal: Use creative AI tools well and responsibly.

AI can now create images, voiceovers, music and short videos from a description. For everyday use this is great for mood boards, presentation visuals, social posts, invitations and quick concept sketches. Describe the subject, style, setting, lighting, colours and format, and iterate just as you would with text.

Responsible use matters. Don't create realistic images, voices or videos of real people without their permission, and never use them to mislead. Check each tool's terms on commercial use, and be cautious about imitating living artists or using brands and characters you don't own.

Many platforms now ask or require you to label realistic AI-generated content, and some tools add invisible watermarks or content credentials. When in doubt, label it.

Key ideas

- Describe subject, style, setting, lighting, colour and format; then iterate.
- Get consent before generating anyone's likeness or voice.
- Check usage rights and label realistic AI content.

Copy-paste prompts

5.1 Image brief

```
Create an image of [subject] in a [style] style, set in [setting], with [lighting] light and a [colour] palette. Format: [square / landscape / portrait]. Leave space at the top for a headline.
```

5.2 Write my image prompt

```
I need a visual for [purpose]. Ask me three questions about the look I want, then write a detailed image prompt I can paste into an image tool.
```

5.3 Script a short video

```
Write a 30-second video script about [topic] for [platform]. Include: a hook in the first 3 seconds, 3 short scenes with on-screen text, and a closing line. Keep the language simple.
```

5.4 Presentation visuals

```
Here's my slide outline: [paste]. For each slide, suggest one simple visual (icon, chart, photo idea or diagram) that would make the point clearer.
```

Try it

Create one image for something real you're working on (a slide, a post, an invite). Do at least three rounds of changes. Note which words in your prompt changed the result the most.

MODULE 6

Privacy, security and AI-powered scams

Goal: Protect yourself, your family and your work while using AI.

Treat anything you paste into an AI tool as something that could be stored, reviewed or used to improve the service, depending on the tool and your settings. Check the privacy settings of the tools you use, and follow your employer's rules for work material.

Scammers use AI too. Cloned voices can sound like a relative in trouble, deepfake videos can show public figures 'endorsing' investments, and AI-written messages no longer have the spelling mistakes that used to give scams away. The warning signs now are urgency, secrecy, unusual payment methods and requests to move off normal channels.

The best defence is a habit: pause, verify through a channel you already trust, and never let a message rush you into paying, sharing a code or installing something.

Key ideas

- Don't paste passwords, ID or card numbers, or confidential work data into AI tools.
- Urgency + secrecy + unusual payment = stop and verify.
- Agree a family code word for emergency calls.

Copy-paste prompts

6.1 Anonymise first

```
Rewrite the text below replacing all names, addresses, phone numbers, account
numbers and company names with placeholders like [NAME] and [COMPANY], keeping the
meaning the same.

[paste]
```

6.2 Is this a scam?

```
I received this message: [paste, with personal details removed]. List any warning
signs of a scam, what the sender might be trying to get, and how I can safely
verify it.
```

6.3 Privacy check

```
I'm using [tool name]. What questions should I ask, and which settings should I look for, to understand how my data is stored and used? Remind me to confirm against the tool's own privacy page.
```

6.4 Family safety talk

```
Help me write a short, friendly message to my family explaining AI voice-clone scams and suggesting we agree a code word. Keep it under 120 words.
```

Try it

Open the settings of the AI tool you use most and find its data and history options. Then share a scam-safety message with one family member or friend.

MODULE 7

Your personal AI workflow and keeping up

Goal: Turn what you've learned into a routine, and judge new AI tools without the hype.

AI tools change quickly, but the skills in this course don't: clear briefing, good inputs, critical checking and safe habits. Rather than chasing every new release, build a small personal toolkit and a habit of reviewing it.

Start with one general assistant you know well, a saved set of prompt templates, and one or two specialised tools for things you do often. Keep your best prompts in a note or document you can copy from.

When a new tool or feature appears, run it through a quick hype filter: what exactly does it do, what does it need access to, what does it cost, what happens to my data, and is it clearly better than what I already use for a real task? If you can't answer those, wait.

Key ideas

- One main assistant, a prompt library and one or two specialist tools is plenty.
- Review your toolkit monthly; try new tools on a real task before switching.
- Use the hype filter before giving any new tool your data or money.

Copy-paste prompts

7.1 Hype filter

```
Here's a description of a new AI tool: [paste]. In plain English, tell me what it actually does, what access it needs, likely costs, privacy questions to ask, and what kinds of tasks it would and wouldn't help with.
```

7.2 Design my toolkit

```
Here are the tasks I do most each week: [list]. Suggest a simple AI workflow: which kind of tool to use for each, a prompt template for each, and what I should keep doing myself.
```

7.3 Monthly review

```
Help me review my AI use this month. Ask me what worked, what wasted time and what I want to try next, then turn my answers into three small goals for next month.
```

7.4 Explain a trend

```
Explain [AI trend or news item] in plain English: what it is, who it affects, what is likely hype versus real, and whether there's anything I should do about it now.
```

Try it

Create a document called 'My AI toolkit'. Add your main tool, your five favourite prompt templates from this course, and a reminder in your calendar for a monthly 20-minute review.

Your 30-day plan

About 15–20 minutes a day. Miss a day? Just carry on from where you are.

Week 1 · Foundations

- Day 1: Read Module 1. Note three things you'll use AI for and three you won't.
- Day 2: Run the Module 1 exercise on a topic you know well.
- Day 3: Read Module 2. Rewrite one real request using BRIEF.
- Day 4: Use 'Interview me first' on a task you've been putting off.
- Day 5: Use 'Reader's critique' on something you're about to send.
- Days 6–7: Save your two best prompts as templates.

Week 2 · Research & safety

- Day 8: Read Module 3. Map a topic you want to learn about.
- Day 9: Summarise a long document faithfully and check three points.
- Day 10: Use 'Compare options' for a real decision.
- Day 11: Read Module 6. Check the privacy settings of your main tool.
- Day 12: Send a scam-safety message to someone you care about.
- Days 13–14: Practise anonymising text before pasting it.

Week 3 · Agents & creativity

- Day 15: Read Module 4. Do the five-task sorting exercise.
- Day 16: Use 'Plan before acting' on a small multi-step task.
- Day 17: Set up one simple rule-based automation.
- Day 18: Read Module 5. Create one image for a real purpose.
- Day 19: Script a 30-second video or presentation intro.
- Days 20–21: Review: which tasks did AI genuinely speed up?

Week 4 · Make it yours

- Day 22: Read Module 7. Create your 'My AI toolkit' document.
- Day 23: Add your five best prompt templates to it.
- Day 24: Run the hype filter on one new tool or feature.
- Day 25: Use 'Explain a trend' on a piece of AI news.
- Day 26: Redo the Module 1 exercise. Notice what's changed.
- Days 27–30: Use your toolkit daily, then do your first monthly review.

Prompt library: quick reference

Every prompt in the course, by module. Find the full text on the page for that module.

Module 1 · How today's AI tools actually work

1.1 Ask for uncertainty · 1.2 Explain like a colleague · 1.3 Check its own work · 1.4 Know the limits

Module 2 · Asking well: the BRIEF method

2.1 The full BRIEF · 2.2 Interview me first · 2.3 Give me options · 2.4 Reader's critique · 2.5 Match my style · 2.6 Turn it into a template

Module 3 · Research and fact-checking with AI

3.1 Map a new topic · 3.2 Summarise a document faithfully · 3.3 Compare options · 3.4 Find the weak spots · 3.5 Plain-English translation

Module 4 · AI agents and automation

4.1 Plan before acting · 4.2 Checkpoint rule · 4.3 Research run · 4.4 Find my automations · 4.5 Debrief

Module 5 · Images, voice and video

5.1 Image brief · 5.2 Write my image prompt · 5.3 Script a short video · 5.4 Presentation visuals

Module 6 · Privacy, security and AI-powered scams

6.1 Anonymise first · 6.2 Is this a scam? · 6.3 Privacy check · 6.4 Family safety talk

Module 7 · Your personal AI workflow and keeping up

7.1 Hype filter · 7.2 Design my toolkit · 7.3 Monthly review · 7.4 Explain a trend

Before-you-use-it checklist

Run through this before you send, publish or act on anything AI helped with.

- ☐ Did I give enough background and a clear task?
- ☐ Have I checked every fact, number, name and date that matters?
- ☐ Did I remove personal or confidential information first?
- ☐ Does it sound like me, and is it right for the reader?
- ☐ Would I be comfortable if people knew AI helped with this?
- ☐ Is a human approving anything that gets sent, paid, deleted or shared?

Keep going

AI tools will keep changing. The habits in this course — brief clearly, give good inputs, check what matters, keep a human in charge of important decisions — will stay useful whatever comes next.

For plain-English updates on new AI trends and tools, visit **thefutureaitrends.com**.

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